

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Council

WEDNESDAY, 3 AUGUST 1887

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Wednesday, 3 August, 1887.

Suspension of Standing Orders.—Joint Committees.—Appropriation Bill.—Copyright Registration Bill.—Valuation Bill.—Order of Business.—Motion for Adjournment.—Appropriation Bill No. 1.—second reading.—Adjournment.

The PRESIDENT took the chair at 4 o'clock.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL (Hon. T. Macdonald-Paterson) moved that so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as would admit of the passing of an Appropriation Bill through all its stages in one day.

Question put and passed.

JOINT COMMITTEES.

The PRESIDENT announced that he had received the following message from the Legislative Assembly :

“MR. PRESIDENT,

“In answer to the message from the Legislative Council of date the 20th instant, notifying the appointment of certain members of that House to serve on joint committees to be appointed under the Joint Standing Orders of the two Houses, the Legislative Assembly beg to intimate to the Council that they have appointed the Honourable the Speaker, Mr. W. Brookes, and Mr. Norton to be members of the Joint Library Committee; the Honourable the Speaker, Mr. Aland, and Mr. Black to be members of the Joint Committee for the management of the Refreshment Rooms; and the Honourable the Speaker, Mr. Mellor, and Mr. Stevens to be members of the Joint Committee for the management and superintendence of the Parliamentary Buildings.

“WILLIAM II. GROOM,

“Speaker.

“Legislative Assembly Chambers,

“Brisbane, 21st July, 1887.”

APPROPRIATION BILL.

The PRESIDENT announced that he had received a message from the Legislative Assembly forwarding, for the concurrence of the Council, a Bill to authorise the appropriation out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Queensland of the sum of £250,000 towards the service of the year ending on the last day of June, 1888.

On the motion of the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, the Bill was read a first time.

COPYRIGHT REGISTRATION BILL.

The PRESIDENT announced that he had received a message from the Legislative Assembly forwarding, for the concurrence of the Council, a Bill to make provision for the registration of copyright in books and dramatic pieces published in Queensland.

On the motion of the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, the Bill was read a first time, and the second reading made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

VALUATION BILL.

The PRESIDENT announced that he had received a message from the Legislative Assembly forwarding, for the concurrence of the Council, a Bill to make better provision for the valuation of rateable land by local authorities.

On the motion of the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, the Bill was read a first time, and the second reading made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

ORDER OF BUSINESS.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said: Hon. gentlemen,—I am not prepared to move the second reading of the Appropriation Bill at this stage, as I have not got copies of the Bill for distribution to hon. members. I will take that course later on.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

The HON. W. F. TAYLOR said: Hon. gentlemen,—I beg to move the adjournment of the House in order to offer some explanation with regard to a certain letter, to which reference was made in this Chamber on a former occasion. The matter has been pretty well ventilated publicly, and so far only one side of the question has been discussed. It is a matter which concerns me personally, and possibly every member of this House to a greater or less extent. I shall endeavour to be as brief as possible, and not occupy more time than is necessary. Some weeks ago I received a printed paper containing a requisition to W. Allan, Esq., signed by a number of the electors of the district of Warwick, for which I am an elector. This paper also contained the reply of Mr. Allan, agreeing to come forward as a candidate in accordance with the requisition, and appended to the bottom, in large letters, were these words: "Mr. Allan respectfully solicits your vote and interest." I waited a considerable time to ascertain whether Mr. Morgan, the other candidate, would pursue a similar course, but not having received any such circular from Mr. Morgan, I came to the conclusion, naturally, I think, that Mr. Allan looked upon me as a supporter of his and consequently solicited my vote and interest at the election which was about to be held. As I did not wish Mr. Allan's supporters to imagine that I would support Mr. Allan, under present conditions and circumstances—because I looked upon him as not the most fit and proper person to represent Warwick at the present juncture—I wrote a private letter to Mr. Patrick Higgins, a gentleman whom I have known very intimately for the past twelve years, and with whom I have often discussed questions of local and general interest, and, in fact, political topics as well. I have always had the greatest confidence in him and regarded him as a man of integrity and honour. I wrote him, as I have said, a private note, stating that I did not consider the return of Mr. Allan to the Assembly would tend to facilitate the passing of a measure which would bring about the construction of the Warwick to St. George railway, and, consequently, the so-called *via recta*. This letter of mine, for my own reasons—if any hon. gentleman wishes to know them I will tell him—I asked Mr. Higgins to keep private. I was somewhat astonished, therefore, to find that the letter had been hawked about Queen street, and in the Queensland Club, by Mr. John Stevenson, M.L.A., and that it was shown to a number of people whose very fine sense of honour is such as to permit them to read a private letter without the consent of the writer. But not only was the letter shown to a number of gentlemen whose fine sense of honour was such as to permit them to read it, but very free comments were made upon my personal character, as I am informed. In fact, I believe I was accused of every crime, from pitch-and-toss to manslaughter. However, the question we have to do with at the present time is as to my private political rights. I do not know what the action of hon. members in this Chamber has been in the past, but it appears that amongst some the impression prevails that when a gentleman accepts a seat in this House he undergoes, in point of fact, political emasculation out

of it; that the fact of a gentleman becoming a member of this House disqualifies him from exercising his political rights and privileges as a private citizen; that the privileges which the law affords to any male individual of the age of twenty-one years, who has resided for six months in an electoral district, are supposed to be denied to a member of this honourable House. A member of this House is not supposed to vote or give any private or public opinion as to who is the best person to come forward and represent the constituency of which he is an elector. This appears to me to be a most preposterous idea. Why should members be disfranchised because they accept a seat in this House and give their time to the country gratuitously? Are they to lose their political privileges as private citizens? If I thought that was the case I would certainly pursue a certain course. If this idea has been entertained, if it has been fostered by members of this Council, my opinion is that a radical change in the constitution of the Council is necessary. In such a case the Council should either become elective or be abolished. In the action I took I exercised my undoubted private right, and I look upon it as a gross piece of impertinence in any person—no matter who he may be—to question my right, whether here or elsewhere. It is a right which every member of this House possesses, and which I should be ashamed to see any member refuse to exercise, even at the risk of being abused by any political demagogue who might choose to attack him. How that letter got into the hands of Mr. Stevenson is probably well known. Mr. Allan, no doubt smarting under his defeat, got the letter from Mr. Higgins and sent it to Mr. Stevenson. That his conduct in connection with it has met with general approval, I am happy to say is not the case. In every civilized community in the world private correspondence is supposed to be held sacred, and a man who, without the consent of the writer, would read a private letter is held, and justly so, to be guilty of a low and contemptible action. I am happy to say that from all classes of the community here I have heard expressions of disapproval of the action that has been taken in this matter. I beg to move the adjournment of the House.

The HON. W. GRAHAM said: Hon. gentlemen,—As far as I remember, on the other occasion when this matter was brought forward, it was introduced by the Hon. W. H. Walsh, who was indignant at the treatment the Hon. Dr. Taylor had received in the other House. I spoke on the subject then, and that is the reason I am now prepared to say a few words, or rather not prepared, but why I think it necessary to make a few remarks. When I rose on the previous occasion my intention was not to censure the hon. gentleman, but to try to find out what he has now claimed in his speech—namely, whether it is the correct thing for a member of this House to interfere in elections of members of the Legislative Assembly. That was my intention. As to the other matters to which he has referred, I think the hon. gentleman has used rather intemperate language and thrown a lot of verbiage about the question; but he still comes back to this fact: that he wrote a very strong political letter to Mr. Patrick Higgins.

The HON. W. F. TAYLOR: A private letter which should not be read by anyone else.

The HON. W. GRAHAM: I do not think I took the trouble to read it.

The HON. W. F. TAYLOR: I understood that the hon. gentleman read it.

The HON. W. GRAHAM: I do not think I read it; at any rate it was not of sufficient

importance to make any impression on my memory. But even if I did read it, the letter was not shown me as a confidential communication. I was told that it had been shown about all the streets of Warwick, and that Mr. Higgins, who the hon. gentleman has stated was a friend of his for twelve years, had said, "Why should he send me a confidential letter? I do not recognise him as a confidential friend." I daresay that when the hon. gentleman knows something more about the conduct of people at elections he will learn that such letters are not made private. So far as the hon. gentleman has attributed dishonourable conduct to me, I challenge him to point to anything that was dishonourable in my action. I have been longer in Queensland than he has, and have a longer record of thoroughly honourable conduct, and I do not think anyone in this House or in any other place, or in all Queensland, would dare to back him up in such a thing. I do not know whether the hon. gentleman was referring to myself or to the Hon. Mr. Walsh, who first brought the matter forward, when he said that his private character had been attacked, but as far as I am concerned I utterly deny the statement. I have not known the Hon. Dr. Taylor myself, but I have often heard of him through friends and relations of my own, and have always had the highest esteem for his private character—not only for his moral character, but also for his intellectual ability. I always thought him to be a man of considerable ability, and was of opinion when he was appointed to a seat in this Chamber that he would adorn it. But I confess that after hearing his explanation of this evening I have seen fit to alter my opinion regarding his ability. That, of course, has nothing to do with his private character. But really after all the verbiage in which he has indulged, and his endeavours to cast a haze over the affair, his speech was not an explanation. It has simply made the matter more hazy. I am as ignorant now of what I wanted to know as I was before—namely, whether it is the correct thing for members of the Legislative Council to interfere in parliamentary elections, and if it is, how should the right be defined? Should a member appear on a public platform or write private letters, and use such influence as he has in the election of members of the other House? I should be glad to hear an expression of opinion on the subject from you, Mr. President, or from the House.

The Hon. J. D. MACANSH said: Hon. gentlemen,—My opinion is that it was quite unnecessary for the Hon. Dr. Taylor to make any explanation of his views with regard to the rights and privileges of members of this House. I consider that when a man becomes a member of the House he does not relinquish any of the privileges which he enjoyed as a private citizen before he was appointed to a seat in the Council. When he is an elector of a district, he has a perfect right to use all his influence in favour of the candidate who he considers will represent the district properly, or against another candidate who he thinks will not represent it properly. That being my opinion, I think it was not necessary for the hon. gentleman to make any explanation in reference to the matter he has brought before the House. The Hon. Mr. Graham has taken exception to the statement made by the Hon. Dr. Taylor that his private character had been attacked. I do not think the hon. gentleman alluded to the Hon. Mr. Graham at all. It was, I think, a reference rather to something which had been said in another place, where the Hon. Dr. Taylor had been accused, by an hon. gentleman who ought to have known better, of having

been bribed. With regard to the letter that was written by the hon. gentleman, and which has been read by hon. members both inside and outside of the House, I should like to know whether some hon. gentlemen who have read it and expressed their views upon it have not taken part in the election, either directly or indirectly? The Hon. Mr. Graham wishes to have a ruling of this House as to whether it is right and proper for a member of this Chamber to take part in an election. I think that if the hon. member wanted to find that out he should have done so before he took any part in the recent election for Warwick. I would ask the hon. gentleman whether he did not write a letter to an elector in that district asking him to use his influence in favour of Mr. Allan?

The Hon. W. GRAHAM: No.

The Hon. J. D. MACANSH: Did the hon. gentleman not write a letter to Mr. James McIntosh, of Blinkbonnie, asking him to use his influence in favour of Mr. Allan?

The Hon. W. GRAHAM: If the hon. gentleman will allow me I will explain the matter, and that may save him some trouble. I only wrote a letter to Mr. McIntosh and sent a telegram to Mr. Patrick Higgins, informing them both that another candidate than Mr. Allan was in all probability coming forward; and I did not solicit their influence in favour of Mr. Allan. There was no necessity to do it, as I knew that both those gentlemen would in all probability support him. Whether they did or not I do not know, but as far as I am concerned I took no part in the election.

The Hon. J. D. MACANSH: The hon. gentleman has admitted that he did write a letter to Mr. McIntosh.

The Hon. W. GRAHAM: I did not write a private letter.

The Hon. J. D. MACANSH: I believe that if the letter was marked "private" Mr. McIntosh is too much of a gentleman to have hawked it about and made it public. Another hon. gentleman who holds a very prominent place in the Legislative Assembly, and who in his speech took credit to himself for not having interfered in the election in any way, also wrote a letter to an elector in Warwick. I will not mention the elector's name, but I may state that he was asked to use his influence in Mr. Allan's favour. And these are the members who come forward and dispute the right of a member of this House to take part in an election!

The Hon. W. GRAHAM: Do not put me along with the other member whose name you are ashamed to mention.

The Hon. J. D. MACANSH: I am not ashamed to mention the name. The gentleman who wrote the letter was the leader of the Opposition in the other House.

The Hon. W. GRAHAM: Who received it? You might just as well be straightforward and outspoken. I was.

The Hon. J. D. MACANSH: I will not mention the name of the gentleman to whom the letter was written, because it was told to me in confidence. I do not think it is necessary for me to say anything more on the subject, except to again repeat that, in my opinion, every member of this House has a perfect right to use all his influence and do all he can in a parliamentary election in the same way as any private citizen.

The Hon. J. TAYLOR said: Hon. gentlemen,—I think it would have been a great deal better if the Hon. Dr. Taylor had kept this explanation back. He was never asked for it.

The HON. W. F. TAYLOR: I was asked for it.

The HON. J. TAYLOR: I did not read the letter referred to, though I know it began with "Dear Pat," and I was wonderfully amused at that. After knowing the district for forty-five years I did not know a gentleman named Pat. There has been a great deal of mud thrown by both sides in regard to this matter, and the sooner it is dropped the better.

The HON. W. F. TAYLOR: With the permission of hon. gentlemen I will withdraw my motion.

Motion withdrawn accordingly.

APPROPRIATION BILL No. 1.

SECOND READING.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said: I beg to move that the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

The Bill was passed through its remaining stages without discussion, and ordered to be returned to the Legislative Assembly by message in the usual form.

ADJOURNMENT.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I beg to move that this House do now adjourn.

The HON. A. C. GREGORY: I move as an amendment that the words "until this day fortnight" be added to the motion.

Amendment agreed to; and question, as amended, put and passed.

The House adjourned at a quarter to 5 o'clock.
